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Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 8795 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN BEIRUT DAMASCU
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QUOTE

S E C R E T CAIRO 8795

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR EG US XF
SUBJECT: WHY DID SADAT ACCEPT AGREEMENT

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH ARAB UPROAR OVER NEW SINAI DISEN-
GAGEMENT FAR EXCEEDS GOE'S EXPECTATION, SADAT HAS
ALWAYS KNOWN THAT ANY NEW DISENGAGEMENT WOULD BE VIOLENTLY
ATTACKED BY RADICAL ARABS. IN OUR VIEW, SADAT'S DECISION
TO ACCEPT AGREEMENT, EVEN THOUGH IT DOES NOT CONTAIN CERTAIN
CONCESSIONS HE HAD HOPED FOR, IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO SEVERAL FACTORS,
CHIEF OF WHICH WAS HIS DESIRE DEMONSTRATE THAT HIS
PRO-QE POLICY IS WORKING. THOUGH HE KNOWS RISKS ARE
HIGH, PRESIDENT AND HIS ADVISORS ARE EXERTING VIGOROUS
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EFFORTS DEFEND AGREEMENT AND HE CONTINUES CONFIDENT THAT
HE CAN PULL THROUGH. SADAT IS AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS
ENGAGED IN ONE OF MAJOR BATTLES OF HIS CAREER; HIS OWN
AND EGYPT'S PRESTIGE ARE ON THE LINE. END SUMMARY.

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2. CURRENT BARRAGE OF CRITICIYO AGAINST SADAT IS MOST VIOLENT HE, OR PROBABLY ANY RPT ANY PRIOR EGYPTIAN LEADER, HAS FACED FROM ARAB SOURCES. BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THE PRESIDENT IS DEFIANTLY DEFENDING NEW AGREEMENT, WHICH HAS TRIGGERED THE UPROAR. HE IS SPENDING HOURS BRIEFING LEADERS OF GOE, ASU, AND PRESS ESTABLISHMENT AND PERSONALLY ANSWERED ARAB CHARGES AGAINST HIM IN HIS SEPT 3 SPEECH. EGYPTIAN MFA HAS SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL ITS AMBASSADORS ABROAD TO EXPLAIN AGREEMENT AND SOLICIT SUPPORT.

3. THROUGHOUT NEGOTIATIONS, EGYPTIAN SIDE HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT AGREEMENT, TO BE DEFENSIBLE IN ARAB CONTEXT, MUST SHOW MINIMAL IDENTIFIABLE EGYPTIAN "INPUT." SENIOR

EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS RECITED TO US TIME AND AGAIN TRADI-
TIONAL ARAB LITANY THAT ARAB WORLD IN GENERAL BELIEVES USG CAN EXTRACT REAL CONCESSIONS FROM ISRAEL WHEN EVER USG CHOOSES, AND WARNED THAT WHATEVER FINAL TERMS MIGHT BE, OUTCRY FROM OTHER ARAB PROTESTING WHAT THEY WERE ALREADY CALLING "USG-GAZIT DRAFT" WOULD BE TREMENDOUS.

4. GOE CONSEQUENTLY EXPECTED SHARP CRITICISM FROM RADICAL ARAB QUARTERS, ESPECIALLY PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS. HOWEVER, UNEXPECTED VIRULENCE OF SYRIAN REACTION IS UPSETTING, AS IS CONCOMITANT DEAFENING SILENCE OF EVEN FRIENDLY ARAB STATES. FAHMY TELLS US PRESIDENT IS CALLING HIM

EVERY DAY TO ASK HIM WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REASSURE AND CALM SYRIANS DOWN, BUT FAHMY CAN OFFER NO SUGGESTIONS BEYOND CONTINUING GOE DETERMINATION ANSWER ALL CHARGES FRANKLY AND OPENLY. FAHMY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN CAMPAIGN IN BEIRUT PRESS TO COUNTER ATTACKS.

5. IN ARAB CONTEXT, THE MOST TELLING OF THESE ANTI-
SADAT CHARGES, AND THEREFORE THE MOST DIFFICULT FOR GOE TO
SECRET

REFUTE, ARE THAT AGREEMENT HAS FROZEN EGYPTIAN FRONT, ENDED STATE OF WAR "PRACTICALLY AND CONTRATUALLY" (PHRASEOLOGY USED BY THOSE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS, SARG AND RABIN), FAILS TO MENTION OTHER ARAB TERRITORIES OR QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, INTRODUCES ARMED "US INTELLIGENCE AGENTS" INTO ARAB TERRITORY, AND REWARDS ISRAELI "EXTORTION" WITH COLOSSAL AMOUNTS OF US AID.

6. SADAT'S ADVISERS, AND TO A LESSER EXTEND SADAT HIMSELF, ANTICIPATED
THESE CRITICISMS, THOUGH THEY HAD HOPED DAMASCUS AT LEAST WOULD NOT RPT NOT AIR THEM PUBLICLY. FURTHER, SADAT DID NOT GET AS MUCH AS HE WANTED AND ON HIS PART HAD TO GIVE MORE THAN

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HE AND HIS ADVISERS CONSIDERED POLITICALLY SAFE. WHY
THEN DID HE ACCEPT?

7. WE BELIEVE THE ANSWER LIES IN A SYNTHESIS OF VARIOUS
CONSIDERATIONS, NONE OF WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN OVERRIDING
ON ITS OWN. THEY ARE:

A. SADAT JUDGED THIS WAS LAST REAL CHANCE
TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HIS SHIFT OF EGYPTIAN FOREIGN POLICY
FROM DEPENDENCE ON SOVIETSTO CONFIDENCE IN USG IS WORKING,
AND HAS NOT HOPELESSLY STALLED ASHIS CRITICS HAVE BEEN
CHARGING. FOR 18 MONTHS HE HAS BEEN UNABLE GET MOVEMENT ON
ISRAELI FRONT; HE WAS BEGINNING TO LOSE SUPPORT FROM SOME
POLITICALLY MINDED EGYPTIANS WHO HAD ORIGINALLY WELCOMED
FIRST SINAI AGREEMENT. THUS, HAVING PASSED THROUGH FRUSTRATION
OF ABORTIVE ASWAN NEGOTIATIONS AND BELIEVING 1976 ELECTION
YEAR WILL MAKE BOLD US DIPLOMACY IMPOSSIBLE, SADAT CONCLUDED
IT WAS NOW OR NEVER. HE WAS CONSEQUENTLY PREPARED TO ACCEPT
AGREEMENT WHICH WAS LESSTHAN HE HAD HOPED FOR AT A PRICE
HIGHER THAN HE HAD EXPECTED TO PAY.

B. OTHER OPTIONS WERE PERCEIVED BY SADAT TO OFFER
VIRTUALLY NOTHING FOR EGYPT. HE KNOWS HE CANNOT "WIN" A
WAR, THOUGH HE DOES BELIEVE HE RETAINS MILITARY CAPABILITY
TO WAGE A LIMITED WAR AND TAKE THE PASSES. FURTHER, HE IS
IN AWKWARD POSITION OF KNOWING THAT IF HE PREEMPTS, HE IS
LIKELY TO LOSE CAREFULLY CULTIVATED USG SUPPORT. AS FOR
GENEVA, SADAT OCCASIONALLY TALKED ABOUT ADJOURNING TO MEPC
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IF DISENGAGEMENT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE, BUT HE KNEW FULL WELL
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DANGEROUSLY STERILE OPERATION, RESULTING
IN POLARIZATION OF SOVIET AND ARABS VERSUS USG AND ISRAEL,
AND CONSEQUENTLY A CRUSHING ADMISSION THAT HIS POLICY WAS
BANKRUPT. HE WOULD NOT EVEN HAVE RECEIVED
TANGIBLE FRUITS OF A DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT,
I.E. OILFIELDS AND ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM PASSES.

C. SADAT, REFLECTING MYSTIQUE OF FREE OFFICERS WHO LED
1952 REVOLUTION, BELIEVES SOVEREIGNTY OF REPUBLIC
RESIDES IN HIM AND THAT ARAB WORLD'S RESPECT FOR HIS PERSON AND
THAT OF HIS OLD COMRADES IS IMMUTABLE. FAHMY CLAIMS THIS
IS SOLE IMPORTANT REASON THAT SADAT NERVED HIMSELF
TO SIGN "BAD" AGREEMENT, AND THAT NOW THESE PREMISES
HAVE PROVEN DRAMATICALLY UNTRUE, PRESIDENT IS IN STATE OF
SOME AGITATION.

D. SADAT WAS IMPRESSED WITH ARGUMENT THAT A DISENGAGEMENT
INVOLVING FIRST ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL BROUGHT ABOUT BY NEGOTIATIONS
AND NOT WAR CONSTITUTES IMPORTANT SYMBOLIC VICTORY,
I.E. BEGINNING OF PEACE PROCESS AT LONG LAST.

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E. SADAT HOPES HE HAS SEALED HIS BORDERS AGAINST ISRAELI ATTACT AT TIME OF RELATIVE EGYPTIAN MILITARY WEAKNESS. IMPORTANT MILITARY SHIPMENTS FROM WESTERN SOURCES, FRANCE IN PARTICULAR, ARE NOT EXPECTED IN QUANTITY UNTIL TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED AND HE HOPES US DEFENSIVE ARMAMENTS WILL NOT BE WITHHELD FROM GOE MUCH LONGER.

F. AS NEGOTIATIONS REACHED FINAL STAGE AND IT BECOMES OBVIOUS MINIMAL EGYPTIAN DEMANDS WERE TO BE MET (OILFIELDS RETURNED AND ISRAELIS "OUT"OF PASSES), SADAT'S ABILITY TURN DOWN AGREEMENT DIMINISHED SHARPLY. LACKING ANY SIGNIFICANT PRETEXT, A TURNDOWN WOULD HAVE BEEN EQUIVALENT TO SLAP AT AMERICANS.

G. EGYPT GOT BACK SINAI OILFIELDS AND REVENUE THEREFROM AND ISRAELIS ARE MORE OR LESS "OUT" OF PASSES. THESE WERE SADAT'S TWO PUBLIC CONDITIONS FOR DISENGAGEMENT.

H. IN NEGATIVE SENSE, SAUDI SUPPORT FOR AGREEMENT
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HELPED SADAT. HAD HE NOT WANTED TO SIGN, SAG PRESSURE ON HIM TO DO SO WOULD HAVE BEEN WITHOUT EFFECT. BUT HAD SAG STRONGLY RECOMMENDED HE NOT SIGN, DESPERATELY POOR GOE WOULD HAVE HAD TO WEIGH RIYADH'S WORDS CAREFULLY.

I. EGYPTIAN PEOPLE ARE IN MOOD TO ACCEPT EVEN "BAD" DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. BUSINESSMEN WANT STABILITY. ARMY IS NOT AFRAID TO FIGHT, BUT KNOWS SEVERE DISADVANTAGE IT FACES. MOST EGYPTIANS ARE TIRED OF WAR AND YEARN FOR ECONOMIC IMPOVEMENTS.

J. SADAT RETAINS FULL CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT FORD'S AND SECRETARY'S DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE TO MOVE PEACE PROCESS ALONG.

8. SADAT, THEREFORE, AGREED TO SIGN -- FAUTE DE MIEUX. HE KNOWS THE RISKS ARE HIGH, FOR HE HAS LEFT HIMSELF OPEN TO ATTACK ON ALMOST EVERY TRADITIONAL "ARAB" PRICIPLE OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. HE HAS AGREED TO PHYSICAL REINTRODUCTION TO THE AREA OF SUPERPOWER "IMPERIALISTS"; HAVING EXPELLED THE SOVIETS, HE HAS INVITED IN THE AMERICANS. HE HAS AGREED TO A DE FACTO SUSPENSION OF STATE OF BELLIGERENCY. VIOLATING BASIC TENET OF ARAB SOLIDARITY, HE HAS BEEN UNABLE ACHIEVE PULBIC AND FIRM DECLARATION OF US DETERMINATION SEEK SIGNIFICANT ISRAELI PULLBACK FROM GOLAN IMMEDIATELY. HE HAS NOTHING TO OFFER PALESTINIANS EXCEPT STATEMENT THAT HE HAS (FRUITLESSLY) URGED US TO BEGIN DIALOGUE WITH PALESTINIANS. IN SHORT, SADAT WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO REFUTE CHARGES THAT HIS IS A SELF-SEEKING "EGYPT FIRST" POLICY WHICH FLIES IN FACE OF ARAB NATIONALIST PRINCIPLES OF 1952 REVOLUTION.

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9. TO MAKE EGYPTIAN SITUATION EVEN MORE STICKY, SOVIETS (NOW THAT AGREEMENT IS INITIALED), HAVE APPARENTLY DECIDED TO TERMINATE THEIR RELATIVE QUIESCENCE RE EGYPT'S PRO-AMERICAN STYLE. USSR HAS ALREADY FORMALLY PROTESTED US MINESWEEPING AT PORT SAID AND REFUSED PARTICIPATE IN GEVENA SIGNING CEREMONY. THERE ARE ALSO SUGGESTIONS OF NEW SOVIET ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON EGYPT.

10. INEVITABLE RSULT OF ALL THIS WILL BE, IN FIRST INSTANCE,
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INCREASING FLOOD OF LEFTIST PROPAGANDA, ALLEGING AN EGYPTIAN-SAUDI AXIS CONTROLLED FROM WASHINGTON. SADAT'S MORAL AND REAL INFLUENCE IN ARAB WORLD WILL DIMINISH, AT LEAST FOR INTERIM. FROM ALL INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, SADAT IS CONFIDENT HE CAN HANDLE WHATEVER DOMESTIC DISSENT OUTSIDE PROVOCATEURS MANAGE TO STIR UP. HE IS ALSO WORKING TO SALVAGE HIS INFLUENCE IN THE ARAB WORLD. HE HAS TAKEN A CALCULATED RISK, BUT MOST OF HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES DO NOT FULLY SHARE HIS CONFIDENCE. THE BATTLE LINES ARE DRAWN; THE OUTCOME HAS YET TO BE DETERMINED.
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UNQUOTE. KISSINGER

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